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ABSTRACT

One in a series written for caregivers or teachers in military child care centers, this staff development module provides brief discussions of aspects of child caregiving, describes related situations which beginning caregivers are likely to find difficult, offers alternate ways of responding to the difficulty, and provides feedback on caregivers' choices. The first section describes functions of the child care center and compares and contrasts children's experiences in the home and in center care. Problematic situations are presented in order to help the caregiver understand the child's transition between home and center, as well as to assist in the comprehension of differences between home and center values. The second section presents problematic situations directed toward dealing with conflict between co-workers and describes how caregivers can derive satisfaction from work well done. (RH)

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The "Caring" Role In A Child Care Center

Staff Development Series

Military Child Care Project

Part I Orientation

April 1982

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FOREWORD

This series of manuals for Child Care Givers on DoD Installations is issued under the authority of DoD Instruction 6060.1, "Training Manuals for Child Care Givers on DoD Installations," January 19, 1981. Its purpose is to provide child care givers with training materials that include the latest techniques and procedures for the safe care and guiding development of children entrusted to their care.

This series of manuals, DoD 6060.1-M-1 through DoD 6060.1-M-17, was developed under the auspices of the Department of Health and Human Services by the Department of Army, in cooperation with the Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps.

The provisions of this series of manuals apply to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, and the Defense Agencies (hereafter referred to as DoD Components) whose heads shall ensure that the manuals are distributed or otherwise made available to all child care givers on DoD installations and that these materials are used in regional and inter-Service workshops, seminars, and training sessions.

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Lieutenant General, USA
Deputy Assistant Secretary

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The "Caring" Role In A Child Care Center

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Staff Development Series

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Part I
Orientation

PART I
TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
A PREVIEW	5
WHAT DOES CHILD CARE MEAN TO CHILDREN?	13
An Extension Of The Family	15
New Experiences	16
Building Your Skills With The Home/Center Relationship	21
HOW CAN YOU DO THE BEST JOB AS A CAREGIVER AND ENJOY IT?	45
Be Realistic About The Demands Of Your Job	47
Be Aware Of Your Own Feelings	48
Take Care Of Your Health And Appearance	50
Building Your On-The-Job Skills	53
OUR ANSWERS	69

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME to the first in a series of staff development modules written for the "caregiver" or "teacher" in a military child care center. We think the hints and ideas provided in these modules will help you on your job. This module, The Caring Role in a Child Care Center, will tell you what role you will play in providing the best possible care for children and in cooperating with their parents. You now are reading Part I of the module, Orientation - to child care and to your job as a caregiver.

Let us introduce you to a new kind of experience, learning through self-paced instruction. This means you will be able to work on your own, by yourself, and at your own pace. In each section a small amount of discussion about important ideas will be provided, followed by some real situations that take place in child care centers. These situations have really happened and come from the experiences of our own caregivers who tell us that new caregivers are very likely to find these situations hard to handle. In other words, the experiences you will find in this module and the other modules are very much like the ones you will run into on your job.

Following this introduction, there are some situations with choices of ways to handle them which you may find fun to do and which also will introduce you to "what's ahead" in the module. Circle your answer to these situations as best you can. Remember, you are just beginning and you may not know how to handle all of the situations at this time, but you also may be surprised at how much you already know about giving care to children. When you have finished, you may want to compare your choice of answers with our answers (see page 69).

After solving the problems, work through the three parts of this module by yourself - at your own speed.

At the end of Part III of the module, you will find another set of situations and ways to handle them. It will be interesting and exciting for you to check yourself on what you have learned by comparing the answers you selected before you read the module with the ones you selected at the end of the module.

Although the situations you are about to read do not in any way cover ALL problems that you may have in a child care center, the more common or frustrating problems you may face are presented.

This module is designed to help you learn to make decisions relating to real problems. The situations have been selected from actual experiences of caregivers in our child care center.

We want to stress that the solutions we present are not the only possible answers to the situations. There are possibly as many "right" answers as there are caregivers. Hopefully, the situations and solutions we present will not only increase your knowledge of your caring role in a child care center but also will stimulate your thinking about yourself, decisions which you will make in your job, and the possible outcomes of your actions.

Here are the situations with choices of possible ways to handle them which we promised you. Think about each situation and then circle what you believe to be the best way to handle the situation. When you have finished, you may want to compare your answer with ours (see page 69). By doing this, you will have some idea of what you will learn in this module about the caregiver's role in a child care center.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF . . .

1. The children have just finished coming in from the playground. They are going to have a guest today from the zoo, who is bringing two small animals to the center. It is your job to prepare them for the guest. As a caregiver, you say:

   A. "Boys and girls, today we have a guest who is going to show you something special. Hang up your coats as quickly as you can and come sit on the rug."

   B. "Boys and girls, it is sharing time. Please sit on the rug as soon as you can."

   C. "Boys and girls, we have something special today for sharing time."

2. Bruce, a seven month old baby, has appeared not to be himself lately. Today, he spent much of the day whimpering and crying. In feeding Bruce, you notice his top front gum is swollen and red. This goes on for several days. As a caregiver, you:

   A. Tell the parents teeth sometimes come in crooked when they have trouble breaking through the gums. Then suggest the parent give Bruce something to bite on which is cool and hard.

   B. Explain to the parent that when teeth are breaking through, it can be very painful. Suggest to the parent that Bruce be checked by the doctor.

   C. Ask the parent if Bruce has seen the doctor lately. Whatever the parent answers, say no more, because you have done your duty and do not wish to offend the parent.

3. The director of the center has recently cut your number of work hours. You are unhappy with this change and feel this was not fair. As a caregiver, you:

   A. Talk this change over with the other caregivers and find out if their hours also were cut.

   B. Discuss both the situation and your feelings with the director.

   C. Talk this situation over with your family and friends, and ask them what they think you should do.

4. Marcy, a five-year-old, is trying to fasten the clasp on a necklace she has found in the playhouse. You sit down next to her and discover she is squeezing the wrong part of the clasp. What can you do to help her? As a caregiver, you say:

   A. "Marcy, sometimes if a clasp won't fasten, you need to study it to see if you are squeezing the right part."

   B. "Marcy, let me show you where to squeeze the clasp and then you will be able to wear the necklace."

   C. "Marcy, you are certainly working hard. The clasp must be squeezed here."

5. Janice, a five-year-old, whines at the slightest thing. She gets her way at home whenever she whines and expects this to work for her at the center. How can you help Janice learn a more acceptable way of letting people know what she wants? As a caregiver, you:

   A. Tell Janice she is a big girl now and whining is not something a big girl does. Ask her mother to talk to Janice about this bad habit.

   B. Tell Janice she is not to whine anymore. Ask her to speak when she wants something.

   C. Tell Janice you like it when she speaks out and lets others know what she wants. Then ignore her whining.

6. Colay, who is four years old, has been coming to the center for some time and continues to have trouble following the rules. From what her mother says, Colay has this same trouble at home. It is time to wash hands before snack time, and she refuses to wash her hands. As a caregiver, you say:

   A. "Colay, in this room, we wash our hands before eating. I would like you to wash your hands before everyone has been seated for snack time. Then you may help serve the snacks."

   B. "Colay, in this room, we wash our hands before eating. If you do not wash your hands, you will not have a snack."

   C. "Colay, you do not have to wash your hands this time because they look so clean. But, tomorrow you must wash your hands before we have snacks."

7. Robin, who is just turning two, takes Christen's crackers during snack time. Christen begins to whimper and then cry. As the caregiver, you say:

   A. "Robin, those are Christen's crackers. Would you like some more crackers? Here they are."

   B. "Robin, I cannot allow you to take Christen's crackers. Give them back and tell Christen you're sorry."

   C. "Robin, if you will only ask, you may have more crackers. Give those crackers back to Christen."

8. Buster places one of the plastic pegs in his left ear and then cannot remove it. After careful examination of Buster's ear, you discover the peg is lodged so tightly that it cannot be removed. As a caregiver, you:

   A. Ask the director to call Buster's parents and have them take him to the doctor.

   B. Wait until his parents come and ask them to remove the peg from his ear.

   C. Put some Vaseline around the peg and see if you can gently pull the peg from the ear.

9. Johnny's mother describes to you an ongoing problem at home. When Johnny's father must go to work, Johnny cries and grabs his father's legs saying, "Don't go again, you won't come back." Johnny's mother further explains that the father has been away several times since Johnny was born. Mother wants to know what you think she should do. As a caregiver, you:

   A. Tell mother she should not worry. Tell her it is a stage children pass through.

   B. Tell mother to comfort Johnny when father leaves. Suggest she stay close to Johnny for a short period of time and then explain to him what they will do for the rest of the day until father returns.

   C. Tell mother to take Johnny to another room in the house and play with him when it is about time for father to leave. Then, father can quietly leave while the two of them are playing.

10. Laura, who is six years old, is printing a message on a special card she is preparing for Mother's Day. She asks you to write the message, "I LOVE YOU," on the card. As a caregiver, you say:

   A. "I'm sorry, Laura, you must write the message. The card is for your mother. I will spell the words for you."

   B. "I will be glad to write such a nice message to your mother. The picture is so pretty! What a thoughtful thing to say."

   C. "If I write the message, I feel the card will come from me. It is such a lovely card. I will be glad to help you spell the words."

11. Blair's eyes are crossed. He is seven years old and comes to the center after school to be with the other school-aged children. Some of the children call him "Crazy Crossed-Eyes." As a caregiver, you:

   A. Explain to Blair that children who make fun of others really feel badly about themselves. Tell him not to pay any attention to them. Suggest to the parents that they find an activity for Blair in which he can be very successful.

   B. Explain to the children at group time that people are different from one another. Then give the children a chance to look around the room and talk about the differences they see among the children. When they bring up Blair's eyes, briefly talk about the differences; then, talk about how people are the same—eyes, nose, mouth, etc.

   C. When Blair is not at the center, explain to the children how they make Blair feel. Say that when they make fun of Blair, he feels badly. Ask them how they would feel if they had crossed-eyes like Blair.

12. Darrin and Daryl are five-year-old twins who attend the center regularly. They usually play in the same area of the room and often grab each other's toys. This time, Darrin has taken Daryl's book. You would like to help the boys learn to share. As a caregiver, you say:

A. "Darrin and Daryl, it sounds to me as if you are having trouble sharing books. Perhaps you both can think of a way for each of you to get to look at the books you want."

B. "Darrin and Daryl, you must not grab things from one another. You must learn to share, because you are with each other so much."

C. "Darrin, I can't allow you to grab Daryl's book. You go over and tell Daryl that you are sorry you took his book."

13. Ellie, a four-year-old, continues to ride her tricycle in the path of the swings. You have shown her the trike-riding path several times. As the caregiver, you say:

A. "Ellie, I can't let you continue to ride the trick in the way of the swings. Perhaps this afternoon you will be able to remember where the trike path is and ride again."

B. "Ellie, here is where you ride the tricycle. If you ride by the swings one more time, I will take the tricycle away."

C. "Ellie, no more trike-riding for you! Now go inside until you think you can ride on the trike path."

14. Josh, a two-year-old, is playing with the sand in the sandbox. Even after he has been told twice that the sand stays in the sandbox, Josh continues to put the sand in a wagon. What do you do now? As a caregiver, you say:

A. "Josh, I have told you the sand stays in the sandbox; now you can no longer play with it."

B. "Josh, I have told you the sand stays in the sandbox. You now must come with me and we will find something else for you to play."

C. "Josh, I have told you about the sand. Now you must go inside because you did not keep it in the sandbox."

15. Betty has her shoes on and is ready to go back to the playroom after naptime. While she waits for the other children, she begins running around the room. This draws the other children's attention away from putting on their own shoes. You need to keep Betty busy. As a caregiver, you say:

A. "Betty, I want you to sit down now and look at a book until the other children are ready."

B. "Betty, you can be my helper. Would you help the other children with their shoes."

C. "Betty, you may go to the playroom and play until the rest of the children are ready."

16. Pat has been gaining the attention of the other children in the room by spitting and swearing. How can you help Pat develop more acceptable skills for gaining attention? As a caregiver, you:

A. Tell Pat's father that Pat spits and swears. Then ask the father how he feels you should handle this.

B. Tell Pat's father each time Pat spits and swears. Then tell the father that you are sure he can help Pat find new ways of making friends.

C. Tell Pat that in the center he may not spit or call other children names. Next, ask Pat what he would like to play. Then help him begin this activity with some of the other children.

17. Chico refuses to wear his jacket when he goes out to play on a warm day. His mother insists he wears the jacket and always asks if Chico has worn the jacket. What should you tell the mother when she asks if he has worn a jacket? As a caregiver, you say:

A. "It was so warm outside today that I told Chico he didn't have to wear his jacket."

B. "Chico refuses to wear his coat outside when it is a warm day. I always insist he wear his coat on a cold day."

C. "None of the children wore their jackets because it was so warm. I was outside with them and checked to be sure that they were warm enough. I hope you don't mind."

18. Eddie is a very active four-year-old who has trouble taking turns. Today he hit another child and demanded his turn. Eddie's parents have very high, rigid standards. When the parents come for Eddie each day, they ask, "How did Eddie get along with the other children?" As a caregiver, you say:

    A. "I am working on helping Eddie learn to take turns, and I am seeing some improvement. I tell Eddie how well he is doing when he takes turns."

    B. "Eddie did not get along well today. He hit another child when he did not get his way."

    C. "Eddie is trying to learn to take turns. You should be proud of him because he is trying so hard."

19. An infant, brought in several hours earlier, has appeared to be getting along fine. You have completed feeding him and have placed him back in the crib for a nap. In passing the infant's crib later, you discover a red flush creeping up his neck and a loud wheezing sound coming from his chest. As a caregiver, you:

    A. Go to the director and ask him what to do.

    B. Pick up the infant and go directly to the director so that he can take appropriate action.

    C. Continue to check on the infant every five minutes.

20. Pete has spent the last two weeks playing with nothing else but the many wooden puzzles in the center. Mother comes for Pete and explains that they must hurry, so they will be on time for a dental appointment. Pete wants to finish the puzzle. As a caregiver, you say:

    A. "Pete, it is time to leave now. You may finish this puzzle tomorrow. I will put it away for you until you come back."

    B. "Pete loves puzzles; let him finish this one so he won't become upset. You can wait a few minutes...the dentist will understand."

    C. "Come on Pete, you can't miss your dental appointment - you must leave now! Hurry, so you won't be late."

AN EXTENSION OF THE FAMILY

Care And Supervision When Parents Are Gone

In simplest terms, "day care" or "child care" is care provided to children in the absence of their parents. It may be all-day care, five days a week; all-night care; care provided when there is a family emergency; or simply, a two-hour drop-in arrangement.

Whatever the care situation, the caregiver, in a sense, is substituting for the parent as a source of emotional support, attention and guidance. Perhaps the most important thing that makes the parent-child relationship so special is just that - the parent is a "special" person to the child and the child is very "special" to the parent. This usually means, to the child, that he knows he is loved, unqualifiedly no-matter-what, even though some of his behavior may not be acceptable. It is important that children feel "special" to someone. When parents are away from their children, children look for and need this "special" feeling. A warm and sensitive caregiver can do much to let a child know that he is appreciated and cared for.

Nine out of ten American households with children under 14 used some type of "child care" in the mid-1970's. In the largest number of families - about one-third - care most often was provided by another relative in the child's own home or in the home of the relative. The next most common type of child care used was care in someone's home who was not a relative - perhaps a friend or a "family day care" provider. A smaller amount of total child care was provided in day care centers or pre-schools.

Extra Support For Children's Growth

In the past, when families often lived in rural areas and most women stayed home with their children, women who left their children were frowned on and considered irresponsible. A major reason for this poor image was the belief that young children separated from their mothers suffered damage. Until the early 1960's this belief was accepted in this country almost without question.

Another idea that was held as "fact" until recently, was that the years from birth until six were primarily a time for physical growth.

The intellectual or social development of children was left pretty much to chance.

Today, many professionals who work with young children believe that good child care in the right child care setting can strengthen the relationship between the family and the child and support the child's healthy development.

Trusted Adults

Families move more often than in the past. Today children often are separated from the close circle of aunts, uncles, grandparents and other kin who have been so important as a source of emotional support to children in the past.

The families of military personnel are often in a particularly difficult spot when it comes to child care. Usually, military families do not live near relatives who could provide a trusted source of other adults to care for their children. Sensitive and caring staff of a child care center can offer children of military families a sympathetic ear and adult models that are not available elsewhere.

NEW EXPERIENCES

Separation From Parents

For some children, coming to a child care center is the first experience that they have had away from their parents or other familiar adults for any length of time. This is a new experience which may or may not be upsetting, depending upon the child. As a caregiver, you need to be sensitive to children's feelings about separation and help them feel secure and cared for.

Those children whose parents work full time or who, for some other reason, attend a child care center full time, spend time with their parents for only a few hours a day. Usually, the early morning hours spent together will be rushed, as the parent gets everyone fed, dressed and ready to leave. In the evening, the parents and child may have time together before the child goes to sleep. Even then, working parents need to shop, prepare meals, and take care of the rest of the family. As a result, children of working parents may spend very little time with them during the week. This makes the caregivers in a child care center very important people in the child's life.

Sharing The "Important Adults"

Another difference between experiences in a child care center and experiences that children have at home is that children in centers have to share the "important adults" - the caregivers - with more children than they do at home. In most centers, a caregiver may be responsible for from three to ten children. Unless a child has many brothers and sisters, she may get less individual attention than she does at home. It may take awhile to get used to sharing the important adults but, at the same time, it can promote a child's ability to do things for herself.

Opportunities For Exploration

A child who comes to a child care center can find a wealth of things to play with and explore by himself or with other children nearby. Most centers provide a variety of opportunities for physical, social, emotional and intellectual development through climbing, singing, painting, expressing thoughts and ideas and playing with other children. Centers often offer opportunities for "messy play" - water play, pasting, poster painting, finger painting - that may not be available at home.

Making New Friends

Making new friends is fun. Children in a child care center have a lot of opportunities to meet other children and play in a variety of situations. An only child, in particular, has a chance to develop more social skills than she would at home with a parent.

Very Close Supervision

The staff of a child care center must be very concerned for the safety of children in their care, and, therefore, supervise them closely. For example, children in a child care center should not be outside on the playground alone, out of an adult's view. In many cases, a child is more closely supervised in a center than he is at home. At home, his parents feel secure about his being unsupervised when he is in his bedroom or out in the yard. One way to give children some privacy in centers is to arrange the space in such a way that, while the entire room can be seen by an adult, children can "get away" from the group and from adults in smaller play areas.

Becoming Part Of A Group

For many of the children, the child care center may be the first time they are with other children in a group situation. Being a member of a group

provides many opportunities for learning how to get along well with other children. It also means learning about sharing, waiting, taking turns, and controlling feelings. It is a different experience from that of being a member of a family, and it may be scary - causing some children to cry, some to draw back, and some to be aggressive.

Seeing A Different View Of The World

Another difference between child care centers and home settings is that care in a center provides the child a different view of the real world. In some centers, children's observations of adults in varied work roles is limited. Centers can isolate children from the "real" world of repairmen, traffic, going to the grocery store, watching a bulldozer across the street. On the other hand, a creative center can provide children with experiences they would be unlikely to get at home - a chance to talk to a fire fighter, a zookeeper, storytellers, health professionals, crane operators.

A center can provide children experiences with other children and adults from a wider variety of backgrounds than they might be exposed to at home. Opportunities for forming friendships with people who speak a different language; dress differently; celebrate different religious holidays; or have to use a wheelchair, for example, are not available in their homes.

Feeling Independent

Children who are cared for outside of the home gain confidence in leaving their parents for periods of time and usually feel good about their ability to be independent and responsible in situations without their parents.

Getting Used To A Variety Of Different Adults And Children

Perhaps one of the most difficult features of a child care center is the necessity for children to learn to relate to more than one caregiver and to children and staff coming and going. In order to make this process as easy as possible, it is important for caregivers to learn children's names quickly and to learn to handle comings and goings with children as smoothly as possible. When the atmosphere of the center is cheerful, warm and relaxed, children can learn to make transitions quite comfortably.

Learning About Routines

Depending upon the way a child care center is run, children may have less freedom to decide what to do and when to do it than they would at home.

Since centers usually operate on a schedule, children may have to take a nap or rest whether they need to or not, for example. At home, children's routines may be more closely geared to the individual child's pattern. It is important to recognize children's individual needs and allow as much flexibility as possible for individual feelings in the center's routines.

19

BUILDING YOUR SKILLS WITH THE HOME/CENTER RELATIONSHIP

. . . Some Often Asked Questions And Situations To Explore

HOW DO YOU EASE THE TRANSITION BETWEEN HOME AND CENTER?

If a child cries on arrival in the center and does not want the parents to leave, it is very hard on both parents and child. The parents often feel guilty and need reassurance as much as the child does. Talk to the child and parents about all the fun activities the child is going to be involved in. Tell them that you, the caregiver, will take good care of the child and really feel the child will enjoy the center.

If the parents are in a hurry when they pick up the child and the child is involved in an activity, tell the child she can take her project home to finish or can play with the toy when she comes the next time. If you know approximately what time the parents will be returning, remind the child when the time is near that she will be leaving soon and should begin to finish up what she is doing. You should show consideration for both the parents and the child.

WHAT WOULD YOU
DO IF . . .

Sheri is three years old, and it is her first day at the center. Mother is concerned when Sheri begins to cry as the mother leaves. Sheri clings to her mother and screams, "Don't leave me, mommy." How can you as a caregiver help both mother and daughter?

A. Assure mother that you will take care of Sheri and will comfort her. Suggest that the mother call in an hour to check on how Sheri is doing. Point out to Sheri all the fun activities there are to do and take her over to one and stay with her for a short time.

B. Tell the mother that usually children only cry a few minutes and to leave now. Explain that you will keep an eye on Sheri.

C. Invite the mother to stay for awhile and then leave when Sheri is not looking.

Answers On Bottom
Of Next Page

Johnny has been coming to the center everyday for two weeks and is still crying each day when his father leaves. The father is obviously embarrassed and becomes angry with Johnny. How can you, the caregiver, help them both?

A. Tell the father that Johnny stops crying within a few minutes after he leaves and not to worry about it.

B. Say to Johnny, "You know you have fun at the center, Johnny. Now stop crying and come play with the blocks." Tell the father to leave Johnny with you and he will be fine.

C. Tell Johnny that you know it is hard for him to leave his father, but to remember that his father always comes back to pick him up. Say, "I am-going to draw a happy face on a piece of paper and when you stop crying, I will pin it on you and you may wear it all day long and take it home. When you come back tomorrow, and if you don't cry, I will give you another happy face to wear." Tell the father that often children have trouble leaving their parents but that you are sure that together you can help Johhny deal with the problem.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is the best answer because you are helping both mother and daughter with the leave-taking, and by suggesting that mother call in an hour, you reassure her that she can check on Sheri's progress. Staying with Sheri for a short time while involving her in an activity makes her feel safer.

Choice B is less reassuring to both mother and daughter and does not give mother the option of calling.

Choice C will reassure Sheri temporarily, but when mother sneaks out, it will cause her to distrust you and her mother. Sometimes having the parent spend a short time with the child does work, but the parent should always tell the child when she is leaving and then you will probably have to use Choice A to help both parent and child.

Carol is drawing a picture when her mother comes to pick her up. Carol wants to finish her picture but mother is obviously in a hurry and doesn't want to wait. How would you handle this situation?

A. Say: "Come on, Carol. Your mother is in a hurry. Get your coat right now."

B. Say: "Carol, it is time to leave now. You may take your picture home with you, or I will save it for you to finish tomorrow."

C. Say: "Carol should be finished in a few minutes. You know how frustrated children become when they can't finish a picture. Can't you wait a few minutes for her to finish?"

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A does not really help Johnny or his father solve the problem. It may reassure the father, but he will probably still be embarrassed that his son is crying.

Choice B does not solve Johnny's problem of leaving his father and does not offer any solutions to the problem.

Choice C is the best answer because you are reassuring Johnny and offering a possible solution to the problem to both father and son. You are also reassuring the father that his child is not the only one who has problems when the parent leaves.

Jimmy loves coming to the center, but when his mother comes to pick him up, he is never ready to leave the activity he is involved in. His mother usually picks him up at the same time each day. How can you help Jimmy be ready to leave?

A. After nap time tell Jimmy you want him to be ready to leave when his mother comes. Explain that she is tired after work and wants to go right home. Ask him to get his coat the minute he sees her come to the door.

B. When the mother comes, explain that children hate to leave their play, and ask if she will wait a few minutes for Jimmy to finish his activity.

C. About ten minutes before Jimmy's mother is due to arrive, tell him that his mother will be here soon and to finish his activity (blocks, picture, puzzle, etc.) so he can be ready to put his coat on when his mother arrives.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not the best answer because it frustrates Carol who wants to finish her picture, and she will probably put up a fuss.

Choice B is the best answer because it gives Carol a choice as to when she finishes her picture, but allows the parent, who is in a rush, to leave now. Both parent and child should find this alternative acceptable.

Choice C is not the best answer because while Carol may be allowed to finish her picture, the mother is going to be frustrated and will be angry with both you and Carol.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not the best answer because by the time Jimmy's mother is due to arrive, he will have forgotten what you have said in most cases. Too early a warning is as bad as too late a warning.

Choice B is not the best answer because the mother probably is tired and has things to do at home. She will be frustrated, and Jimmy will not learn to prepare to leave on time.

Choice C is the best answer because you are giving Jimmy a chance to finish his play and still be ready to leave when his mother arrives. Both Jimmy and his mother will be happy with this solution.

HOW DO YOU HANDLE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HOME AND CENTER VALUES?

In a child care center, children come from a variety of backgrounds. Many times the rules at home and the rules at the center are different. You, as a caregiver, must abide by the center rules and be sure that they are upheld in your room. This does not mean to put down the rules the child has at home, only that you let him and his parents know what the rules at the center are. As long as children and parents understand the limits set on children's behavior and activities at the center, and you do not say the center's rules are the best and only limits for families to have, you will not offend the parents. You may even influence them to make changes at home.

WHAT WOULD YOU
DO IF . . .

Jeff, who is three and a half, has spent the morning in your room. He has had an argument with Johnny and the result has been that they hit each other. Jeff tells his father about the fight when he is picked up. The father asks, "Did you hit him back?" When Jeff answers, "Yes," the father says, "Good boy!" He then turns to you and says he wants Jeff to learn to "stick up for his rights." What do you, the caregiver, say to the father?

A. "At the center, the rule is that children should use words to settle their differences. We feel this helps them express their feelings without physically hurting another child."

B. "I cannot allow Jeff to hit another child even in defense. I feel children should learn to express their feelings with words - not with hitting. Physical abuse can cause serious injury to a child."

C. "I am not allowed to let children hit each other if I can stop them. We punish children who hit. You will have to discuss your attitude about hitting with the director, and if he agrees that Jeff may hit back, then I will allow him to do so."

Answers On Bottom
Of Next Page

Nancy comes to the center frequently and brings her own lunch. It usually consists of kool-aid, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and cookies or cake. You are concerned that Nancy has an unhealthy diet. What can you say to the mother when she picks Nancy up?

A. "We are talking about good foods this week and Nancy may be asking for fruit and milk in her lunch. We are really trying to push good nutrition at the center."

B. "We've been discussing foods that are good for us." "Nancy, tell your mother what foods are good for breakfast. How about lunch? Good for you, Nancy, you remembered them well." "I'm trying to stress with all the children that sugary foods are not very good for them. I've asked them all to try and bring nutritious lunches to the center."

C. "Here is a picture Nancy made of things that would be good to bring in her lunch. Perhaps it will give you a few new ideas for lunches."

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is the best answer because you state the center's policy and the reasons for this policy without criticizing the father's beliefs.

Choice B makes no mention of center policy. It gives the father your opinion, and it is obvious you do not agree with him. Your personal value system should not be forced on any child.

Choice C passes the problem on to the director and suggests criticism of the father's method of handling arguments. You know the center's policy, so why not tell the father, who can then go to the director on his own if he chooses. Since you know the director sets center policies, why waste his time and the father's unnecessarily?

Joe, who is 3 1/2, uses swear words all the time. When he is angry, he often calls other children foul names. Other parents have complained to you but you know that Joe's father swears and uses foul language a lot. How would you, as the caregiver, handle this?

A. Say to Joe: "Those are naughty words that nice little boys don't say. Swearing and using bad words are against the rules of this room."

B. Say to Joe: "I'm going to have to talk to your parents if you keep saying those bad words."

C. Say to Joe: "Joe, in this room, we call our friends by their names." "Joe, in this room, we say darn - not damn," etc. Deal with each "bad" word as it comes up.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not the best answer because it really is not specific enough. Mother could very easily ignore this.

Choice B is the best answer because you involved Nancy in telling her mother and you were specific about sugary foods. However, you did not put Nancy's mother "on the spot," but talked about all children bringing nutritious lunches.

Choice C is much too general and really does not tell the mother anything you want her to know.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not the best answer because you are labeling talk that Joe hears at home all the time as "naughty." He also may not know what swearing means or that the words he is using are "bad" words.

Choice B is not the best answer because Joe may become very anxious since he can tell that you are angry with him, but he's not sure what words you think are "bad." Remember, he hears his parents use them a lot.

Choice C is the best answer because you are not labeling him or his words as "bad" or "naughty." You are giving him acceptable substitute words. You are also not making him feel that his parents are "bad" because they say "those" words.

BE REALISTIC ABOUT THE DEMANDS OF YOUR JOB

You Have To Like Children

Working in a child care center is not an "easy" job. It requires a great deal of energy, patience and enthusiasm. There are many jobs—which are not so demanding—available for people who just need to get a paycheck. This is NOT one of them. For all those involved in the center—the children, the parents, the staff, and you—you must ENJOY what you are doing. How can you do this? Obviously, it is necessary that you have a basic liking for children for this job to be enjoyable and satisfying. If you didn't, we assume you wouldn't be here.

Don't Expect To Get Rich

If one of your standards of measuring your own success in life is the amount of money you earn, you may be in the wrong job. Although we all know that some money is essential, you will probably enjoy your job more if you realize from the beginning that no one is going to "get rich" working in a child care center. Low pay for everyone - caregivers and directors, alike - is a problem. And yet, the biggest expense of any center is paying the wages of its staff. Most of the fees paid by the parents goes to pay our wages. Because the pay is low, your main joy must come from the children themselves and knowing you are doing a very important job.

Do What Is Expected Of You

Beyond that, you will find your work enjoyable and easier if you know and understand what your responsibilities are. Learn and do what is expected of you. Some of the duties which you are required to do may seem more pleasant than others. Who really likes doing the necessary clean-up chores involved when working with young children? This is true of nearly all jobs. But, the center runs smoothly only if ALL jobs are done—the "nice" with the "not-so-nice." Whining or grumbling doesn't help get the "not-so-nice" chores done, but if all the staff takes part in these duties, they seem to get done quickly.

Cooperate With Other Staff

Being agreeable and pleasant are important. The real test for enjoying your job is probably one of human relations—how well all the people in the center get along with each other. You must

live and work very close together through long, hard hours. Even if you have differences, you must be able to cooperate and feel comfortable with each other. The staff must work well with each other. A sense of humor helps. It relieves tensions and permits you to laugh and see the lighter side of your problems. And, you ought to be able to laugh and have fun in your job.

Keep in mind that directors, supervisors, and lead teachers are also a part of the staff. Although it is sometimes very hard for caregivers and these people (management) to see eye-to-eye, your relationship with them can increase your success on the job. When problems arise--and they will--knowing to whom you should go will ease your frustrations. Directors may not always know all of the answers either, but they will contact someone who does. Without management (those who design programs, make plans, resolve problems, arrange for money, and hire staff), you would not have a job. Remember, they want and need your help every bit as much as you need their understanding and support. A center's purpose of caring for children requires total staff cooperation and a respect for one another and the job to be done.

BE AWARE OF YOUR OWN FEELINGS

Try To Keep Personal Problems At Home

When working with other members of the staff, it is wise to remember that, like children, adults change and have feelings. They change and may have different feelings as they get to know each other better or as they get excited or bored or tired. Although adults who work with children are expected to be able to control their feelings, there may be times when a caregiver is troubled by a personal problem, a sick child or financial difficulties at home. In a center where emotions and feelings are so important, it is hard to cover-up such personal disappointments. Yet, to have the energy and ability to provide for the children, personal troubles should be put aside. If you should have a really strong feeling and it is interfering with your work, it might help to talk to your supervisor about it or to ask for a few days off. Personal problems must be left at home in order to provide a happy atmosphere for others in the center.

Admit Your Mistakes

Providing a happy atmosphere does not require "perfection." You will be happier if you keep in mind that we are all human. No one in the center is perfect--everyone is learning. This includes the staff, who can have a wonderful time with the children while doing so. Accept the fact that there is no magic that makes adults perfect simply because they are 20-, 40-, or 60-year-olds. We all make mistakes and we all need a second chance to admit it, correct it, and avoid making the same mistake again. It doesn't hurt to say, "I made a mistake. I'm sorry." Allowing yourself to be this open and honest is essential to feeling good about your job.

Be Open And Honest On The Job

Open and honest communication among the staff is important to the smooth operation of the center. Each person must be able to readily accept suggestions, directions and criticisms without getting angry. Information and instructions must be passed on throughout the day. But, gossip and rumors can cause a great deal of harm. Children and parents are not likely to feel good about the center if the staff is complaining or gossipy. It's not very pleasant to work in such a situation, either. Disagreements and complaints should be discussed in private or in a staff meeting.

Be Aware Of And Respect Differences

We all are different and, as a result, will have differences of opinion. Wouldn't it be dreadful if we all looked alike, thought alike, and acted alike? And, not all people live by the same standards. Adults, as well as children in a center, come from all kinds of lifestyles and backgrounds. It is important that you feel proud of yourself and your background and that you also appreciate and respect those who are different from you. For example, remember that:

- not everyone celebrates Christmas or Passover or Easter
- there are different types of families - unrelated people living together, single-parents, families with adopted children, etc.
- not all people eat the same foods - some eat only vegetables, some eat kosher, some eat grits

These differences are special and you must show understanding of the differences by not imposing your standards on others - children or adults.

Don't Come To Work If You're Sick

It probably goes without saying that you will find more enjoyment in your job if you are in good health. When you are healthy you have enough energy to cope with the abundant energy of children, the messes, the noise, the general hustle-bustle of a group, and the confusion of many activities happening at one time. Good health enables you to be cheerful and confident and patient. You are not so bothered by temper tantrums or a crying child. You are more alert, an important part of working with children. You also get along better with other staff when you feel good. Those in poor health tend to be tense and jittery and find it hard to be energetic. They are likely to simply "let the kids do their own thing" while they stand (or sit) near-by.

If you are sick you should not be working (this includes coughs, colds, sore throats). You probably will want to come to work even though you are not well, thinking that you do not want to leave the center short of staff. But this is not good for anyone—you, the children, parents, or other staff (remember germs spread rapidly and they can get sick, too). Centers do have other people who can be called to replace you when you are ill.

Wear Comfortable, Washable Clothes

Dressing appropriately for the work that you do also will help make your job easier and more enjoyable. Although a good appearance is important, there is no need to "dress up" in a center. It is more important to wear clothes that are comfortable and washable. However, dressing comfortably does not mean a sloppy appearance. Children love pretty, bright colors, ribbons, flowers, or an inexpensive piece of jewelry (which they can admire). By the way, they also notice the way you smell—deodorant is a must and a dab of cologne is pleasant. Pants, loose-fitting tops (smocks) and sensible shoes work well in a center. There are messy projects—mixing paint, feeding little ones—and you will be down on the floor much of the time for the children's activities. Your clothing should not interfere with the duties

that you must perform. But do let the children know you care for them by being well groomed and caring about your appearance (they do notice).

ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS

1. **Do I enjoy kids?**
   Necessary for survival.

2. **Am I willing to work and to learn?**
   No one reaches perfection, but if you are willing, you will learn as you work.

3. **Am I punctual and dependable?**
   The center's success depends on all staff members being on time and doing their share.

4. **Am I flexible?**
   New and changing situations will always arise and you must be able to cope with them.

5. **Am I patient?**
   Important if you are to live long hours with your children.

6. **Do I get along well with people, and can I accept people who are different from me?**
   Respect and cooperation are essential in a center.

7. **Do I have a sense of humor?**
   Being able to see the funny side of "things" helps.

8. **Can I accept criticism without becoming angry?**
   We learn through our mistakes.

9. **Am I neat and well groomed?**
   Children pay attention to your example.

10. **Can I keep a secret and refuse to gossip?**
    Private matters about children, parents or staff must stay in the center.

11. **Can I follow the rules of the center?**
    Rules provide order within the center.

12. **Do I leave my personal problems at home where they should be?**
    Happy caregivers bring out the best in children.

13. **Can I follow directions?**
Others working with you cannot oversee your work constantly; they must be free to work with the children.

14. **Will I receive many unnecessary telephone calls while at work?**
Children must receive care and that's not what's happening if you're on the phone.

15. **Do I insist on a "coffee break" or take long "breaks" even though the center is very busy?**
Your co-workers will be irritated if you do.

16. **Do I use supplies and equipment as if I were paying for them?**
Money is important to the center, too.

17. **Am I a good listener?**
Children, as well as adults, need to be heard.

18. **Am I healthy, and can I be active most of the day?**
Caring for children is exhausting.

19. **Can I really enjoy the job?**

If you have answered "yes" to most of these questions, you will probably enjoy this job and be successful. You may have to work at developing those which you have not checked because you will have a hard time getting along without them. But, remember, no one person is perfect.

. . . Some Often Asked
Questions
And
Situations To Explore

HOW CAN YOU GET ALONG WELL WITH YOUR CO-WORKERS

Getting along well with others is a most important part of any job. In a child care center, the interests of children and their families can best be served by a staff working in harmony.

When you work with children, it is often obvious that they feel the world revolves around them - they make no attempt to hide this feeling. Normal adults retain more than a little of the child's self-centeredness, although they are not so obvious about letting you see it. If you cause them to feel unimportant, they will resent it. Everyone wants to feel important and be accepted. Everyone has a need to be recognized, thought well of, respected, and to be loved. Without feelings of love and acceptance, the child is in for a bad time growing up. And adults who do not enjoy acceptance are not much better off.

Some "ground rules" for good staff relations might be:

- Respect and accept individual differences - accept the fact that there are many "styles" of caregiving and many possible ways to do a good job.
- Avoid passing judgment on what a co-worker does.
- Give support to co-workers, and share ideas with them.

And, keep in mind, "Actions Speak Louder Than Words."

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF . . .

You feel that you are always given the "dirty work" to do in the room while your co-worker stays with the children and never helps clean up, change diapers, etc. How could you handle this?

A. Discuss the situation with caregivers in other rooms and see how they handle the "dirty work" - then ask your co-worker to do the same things.

B. Ask your co-worker if the two of you could discuss how to handle the responsibilities in the room. See if you can divide the work more fairly so that each of you has some "dirty work" as well as the fun work.

C. Discuss the situation with your director.

Answers On Bottom
Of Next Page

You have worked very hard on an art idea to do with the children. When you begin doing it with a group of children, your supervisor comes in and watches. A parent comes to pick up his child and comments to the supervisor on what a good idea the art project is. The supervisor says, "Thank you. I try to plan interesting things for the children to do." What do you do or say?

A. After the parent leaves, ask your supervisor if - the next time a parent comments on something you have planned - you could talk to the parent about it.

B. Say to the parent, "Jean, my supervisor, really does have good ideas, but this art idea was mine. I'm glad you liked it."

C. Don't say anything this time, but be sure that your supervisor does not take the credit again. In the future, greet parents yourself and tell them about the art project you planned.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not the best answer because when you have a problem with a co-worker, you should talk with them, not with other staff.

Choice B is the best answer because you are trying to solve the problem with your co-worker's help.

Choice C is not the best answer because you should try and solve the problem with the help of your co-worker before involving the director.

Your co-worker often takes a 20-minute break when only a 15-minute break is allowed. How would you handle this?

A. Tell your supervisor about it, and let him talk with your co-worker.

B. Begin to take 20-minute breaks yourself so your co-worker will understand how you feel.

C. Ask you co-worker to please come back after 15 minutes because you are finding the room schedule is not going smoothly when she is gone longer.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is the best answer because you are handling the problem with your supervisor in a positive way.

Choice B will probably embarrass your supervisor and let the parent in on the problem, too.

Choice C is not the best answer because you are not discussing the problem with your supervisor.

You have purchased a new pair of shoes and are wearing them for the first time to work. You find they are very uncomfortable to work in, so you take them off. Your supervisor comes in and tells you that you must wear shoes at work. What do you do or say?

A. Explain you took the shoes off because they were uncomfortable, and then put them back on.

B. Tell your supervisor that the shoes are uncomfortable and that you will not wear them.

C. Put the shoes back on and when your supervisor leaves, take them off again. Carry them with you so if your supervisor comes back, you can quickly put them on again.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not the best answer because you are not trying to first solve the problem yourself with the co-worker.

Choice B will solve nothing and may get you in trouble.

Choice C is the best answer because you are letting your co-worker know you are aware of the extra long break and are explaining why it bothers you.

You are working with "Teacher Tom" with a small group of young children, and you notice that he insists that children always must say, "I'm sorry," when they do something wrong. What would you do or say?

A. Nothing, because children should learn to be courteous to others.

B. Suggest privately to "Teacher Tom" that you don't believe it is necessary that children say, "I'm sorry." Explain that you feel that saying, "I'm sorry," does not make the behavior all right and that a child may think if he says, "I'm sorry," it makes the behavior okay.

C. Talk to the supervisor or director.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is the best answer because you made the mistake of wearing the shoes and must take the consequences. Caregivers must always wear shoes while working.

Choice B is not a good answer because you are defying your supervisor and may get fired.

Choice C can also get you in trouble and is not a good example to set for the children. You cannot do your job and carry your shoes around.

Answers From Previous Page

Choice A is not the best answer. Although some adults believe it is important for children to be polite, insisting that children say "I'm sorry" may be teaching children to lie. The child may not be at all sorry for his behavior.

Choice B is the preferable solution. If you disagree with another caregiver's decisions or actions, it is best dealt with privately between the two of you, if at all possible.

Choice C is not the wisest choice. Two caregivers working together should be able to discuss differences of opinions without consulting the director.

OUR ANSWERS

Situation 1	A
Situation 2	B
Situation 3	B
Situation 4	A
Situation 5	C
Situation 6	A
Situation 7	A
Situation 8	A
Situation 9	B
Situation 10	C
Situation 11	B
Situation 12	A
Situation 13	A
Situation 14	B
Situation 15	A
Situation 16	C
Situation 17	C
Situation 18	A
Situation 19	B
Situation 20	A

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